133
132
241
231
31
433
491
496
505
463
135
361

[For information on the topography, climate, agriculture and commercial crops, irrigation, stock raising, natural resources, production and supply, waterways, railways, and roads of the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates between the plateau of Asia Minor and the Persian Gulf, discussed as one geographical unit, rather than by political boundary, see, M1 Middle East, cat. 116, 21: Fisher, pp. 340-370.]

[For information on the topography, climate, agriculture, mineral wealth, railways, settlement pattern, productive capacity of the economy, and trade of the Levant coastland, see M1 Middle East, cat. 116, 21: Fisher, pp. 371-414.]

[For information on the topography, occupations and relative productivity of the desert plateau, and of the Arabian Peninsula as a whole, see M1 Middle East, cat. 116, 21:Fisher, pp. 427-449.]

But proofs of their increase are the hundreds of new villages tilled by Kurds and built by them in the regions of Kubur el Bid, Amuda, and Derbassiya.

The Kurds like the Arabs, follow a tribal organization. Starting from the east, the Koshar tribe, mostly nomadic but recently turning to agriculture, dominates Jazirat ibn Amr, i.e., the region of Deink and Ain Diwar. The Koshar border Shammar on the south and they are on fighting terms because Nayefz Pasha, chief of the Koshar, killed the brother of Dham, chief of Shammar. Next to the west is the Shitiya tribe around Kubur el Bid. This tribe is old in the region. Its members are Arab in their dress and, in contrast with all the other Kurdish tribes, they speak Arabic as well as Kurdish. Its lands lie west of Shammar and more within the Tay region but its relations with both are friendly.

Qamishli, which is a Tay region, includes villages of the Pinar Ali tribe. But west of Qamishli comes a solid bloc of 100% Kurdish villages extending for more than sixty kilometers and reaching to the west of Dirbassiya practically uninterrupted by any Arab village. This area is undoubtedly one of the most fertile of Jazirah. Within it, the Dakkuriya tribe is centered around Amuda, then follow the Kikiya around Dirbassiya, and the Milliya from Dirbassiya to Ras el Ain.

The Kurds are considered very good farmers. They plow and plant with mules but they rent combines for the harvest. This is because they have learned that combine harvest is more economical. The Kurd is also greatly praised for his character. He is truthful, honest, and upright in his dealings. He keeps his word and the merchants of the Jazir trust him completely. He is also clean in his home and in his dress, and though Bedouins reproach him for not being generous in his house, his standard of living is higher than the Bedouin and his villages are much cleaner.

The Kurds owe allegiance to their Agha who takes the place of the Bedouin Sheik. But this relationship is weaker than is the case of the Bedouins. The successive Governments did not give the Agha grants of money or similar authority over his tribesmen in the manner of the Sheik. The Kurds were considered from the start sedentary people subject directly to Government laws. That is why most of the Kurds own and till their lands in their own right.

III The Shashans

The Shashans, a Circassian tribe around Ras el Ain, complete the rural population of Jazirah. They migrated to Syria during the Ottoman rule and settled as mercenary soldiers. They are not good at agriculture and their lands are not fertile and do not compare with those of the Kurds.

IV. The Christians

The cities and commercial centers of Jazirah are an extra-ordinary mixture of races and creeds, but they are perhaps more than 80% Christian. This is true of Kubur el Bid, Qamishli, Amunda, Dirbassiya and Hassakeh.

As in the case of the Kurds, the Turkish massacres of the Christians in Mardin and the mountainous country around it started their migration to Jazirah. The Christians reached Jazirah without property or capital with which to begin. They settled mostly in the towns mentioned. A few of them already owned lands, others were traders and had previous relations with the Bedouins and Kurdish tribes. In a relatively short time the towns grew and flourished. The Christinas prospered from commerce before the expansion of agriculture. The tariff differences between Syria and Turkey on such important commodities as sugar, tea, and coffee and the intermingling of the Kurdish population on both sides of the frontier, made the Jazirah towns ideal for an extensive smuggling business.

The town Christians also served as middlemen to the merchants of Aleppo, who provided the money to lend to the Bedouins and Kurds or to buy the sheep, cattle and crops. This work on a commission or partnership basis coupled with the smuggling business proved profitable to the merchants of Jazirah, so that during the last twenty years many of them have become wealthy and have come to own real estate and agricultural lands and machinery without, however, abandoning their commercial activities with the merchants of Aleppo. In fact, the general prosperity and development of Jazirah has increased its need for the credit of Aleppo.

This picture of the Christian population of Jazirah is not complete without mention of the Christian peasants who migrated from the mountain villages and settled in the country. Though Christian and living in villages 100% Christian, some of them are Kurdish in their language, dress and customs. Some other villages are populated

by Syriac Christians who speak Syriac and Arabic. A few villages are completely Armenian. Most of these villages are around Kubur el Bid and Qamishli. These Christian peasants are very devout. They are also conservative and always remember the injuries inflicted upon them in Turkey. There is hardly a Christian family in the towns or villages which did not lose a relative or a friend in the massacres. Therefore they are always on their guard against their Moslem neighbors and are always suspicious of the Government. Their bitterness is not likely to disappear for some time to come, and is a factor to be considered in the political development of Jazirah.

The Christians of Jazirah belong to all creeds and denominations. The largest community in numbers and in importance is the Syriac Orthodox, followed by the Armanian Orthodox. There are Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, Armanian Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Nestorians. It should be mentioned that what determines the origin and affiliation of a man in Jazirah is not his language or dress, but his Church. Thus a Kurd who speaks only the Kurdish language, who lives like a Kurd on the same standard of living, and who dresses like one, is yet an Armenian or a Chaldean or a Jacobite because he belongs to one of these Churches. His original language and customs have been lost by living for ages in a foreign environment. That is why one finds in Jazirah and the mountains beyond it the only Christian Kurds in the world. But in reality they are not Kurds. They are Armenians or Syriacs or Chaldeans who have adopted the Kurdish language and their true nationality can be known only by referring to their Churches.

A more recent concentration of Christians in Jazirah is constituted by the Assyrians aronnd Tal Tamr on the Khabur. Following the massacre of the Assyrians in Iraq in 1933 and their expulsion from that country, the French in Syria gave them asylum, and the League of Nations appropriated funds to settle them along the Khabur. Lands were granted to them and villages were built in which motors and pumps were installed for irrigation. Nevertheless during these 19 years all the efforts appear to have been useless. The ten thousand Assyrians who migrated to Syria lead a wretched life. Their motors are not in a working condition, their crops are not abundant and they are now trying to sell their lands. The reasons for such a condition may be found in the fact that the Assyrians are not farmers and the lands given to them are of a poor quality.

During the French Mandate, the Christians of Jazirah, with the memory of the Turkish massacres still fresh, and considering all

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI

S L 181

In neither country is there an officer caste or a strong military tradition, though the present Syrian regime is trving to create one.

Social Survey

S L 565 0463 511

The ruling class in both countries is drawn from wealthy families; titles do not exist and the 'old' rich families, whose position and wealth come from land, mix freely with the 'new' rich families, whose money comes from commerce. There is no stigma in engaging in trade and even members of the upper class are merchants. A middle class of functionaries and employees has been growing up since 1948 in the three main cities. Their flats, between the splendour of the rich quarter and the huddle of the *suq*, are being built in quantities and their new, middle-class way of life is based on European standards. The mass of the people are artisans and labourers. The urban artisan approaches the middle class and the rural labourer approaches the hard life of the nomad; for the farm labourer the standard of living is generally low.

The Press

S L 204 656

The press of both countries is important but no one paper or group of papers has established an ascendancy. Damascus had at one time over twenty daily papers none of which could guarantee a circulation of over 3,000. The same state of affairs holds true in Beirut where most parties issue Arabic and in some cases French papers; there are also Armenian newspapers and one English daily.

Individual Lebanese have founded papers and *Le Commerce du Levant*, published in Beirut, has a standing comparable with *La Bourse Egyptienne*. In both countries press censorship has frequently closed down a paper only for it to re-emerge under another name, and in Syria the military dictatorship has reduced the press to a mere mouthpiece of official propaganda.

Education

S L 871 [212] 658

In both countries there are primary and secondary schools, and the number of schools and students increase each year. Primary education is compulsory, and although reliable figures of literacy are not available,[1] it may be assumed that the percentage of illiterates is decreasing in both countries, but is higher in Syria than in Lebanon. In Syria, most of the schools are run by the state and of the private schools (which are

[1] An estimate for Syria for 1947 given in UN, Dept. of Social Affairs, *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*, 1952, was 40–50 per cent.

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
SYRIA MDI

1874 formed part of the plan for complementary education, which was of two kinds: general complementary, restricted to general cultural courses, and vocational complementary, combining cultural and trade education. A certificate known as the general *brevet* was given at the end of the general course after the student had passed a public examination, and "vocational *brevets*,"—Technical, Commercial, or Agricultural—were given at the end of the vocational courses after public examinations.

The attempt to make the vocational schools a part of the complementary education had resulted in a heavy overloading of the course of study, and the students were working and studying for forty-six periods a week in the technical schools besides which there were additional study periods that were compulsory for boarding students. After the abolition of the complementary system in the new educational organization the vocational schools were considered as independent schools, and an attempt was made to lighten their programs.

The number of students in the public vocational schools in 1943–44 was 1,024, and in the following year, 1,011. A summary description of the schools visited by the Commission will perhaps give the best picture of public vocational education in Syria.

THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS

[736] The Technical School for boys at Aleppo dated back to 1900 when it was founded in connection with an orphanage, with the idea of providing trade education for orphans. Its connection with the orphanage was severed in 1924–25.[1] It had 148 students in 1945–46, of whom 73 were boarders. Eleven of these paid annually a sum of £S240 (about $108.00) for their board, and the other 62 had free board at the expense of the state. The boarding students come from the outer districts of the governorate of Aleppo as well as from the governorates of Homs, Hama, Latakia, and Dayr al-Zur. Thus, about one-half of the student body is from outside Aleppo, and an attempt is being made to give opportunity for vocational education to students from the smaller towns. No tuition fee is charged.

The new program of study, issued in November 1945, covers four years and combines general cultural with vocational work. It includes religion, civics, Arabic, a foreign language, mathematics, physics, history, geography, physical education, industrial drawing, technology, and shopwork. In the first year, which is a preparatory year, the shopwork is common for all

4/3 7/3

[1] This conception of technical education as primarily suited to orphans is of long standing and has persisted until lately in the Damascus technical schools for boys and for girls. In recent years steps have been taken to separate the orphanages from the technical schools in that city.

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
SYRIA MD1

of the babies treated at the maternity and child health center in Damascus suffer from intestinal infections. Epidemics of diarrheal disease often coincide with the ripening of the apricot crop. The ready contamination of this thin-skinned fruit by flies and other insects accounts for the local designation of the early summer diarrheas in the fruit-growing districts as *mish mish* (apricot) disease.

Cholera. Serious outbreaks have accompanied the introduction of cholera in the past, but the disease was absent from Syria from 1928 to 1947, shortly after the epidemic in Egypt. On December 19, 1947, cholera was reported from 2 adjacent villages in the province of Hauran, on the road from Palestine to Damascus. At the same time, cases occurred in 3 villages in the irrigated plain of the Al Ghouta, within 3 or 4 miles of Damascus. Although 45 cases, with 18 deaths, were reported officially, it was generally believed that the actual incidence totaled at least 77 cases.

Quarantine measures were promptly imposed in Hauran and Damascus provinces, and all persons entering or leaving those regions were required to possess certificates of immunization against cholera. Over one and one half million individuals were inoculated with cholera vaccine in the vicinity of Damascus, as well as in the affected districts of Hauran and in the city of Aleppo. Supplies and assistance were furnished the Ministry of Health by the World Health Organization, the Near East Foundation and the Egyptian and Lebanese governments. Vaccine was also provided jointly by the Arabian American Oil Company and Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company. No cases were reported after the initial outbreaks, and on January 17, 1948, Syria was declared free from the disease. The exact origin of the epidemic was never definitely established.

Helminthiases. ANCYLOSTOMIASIS. Hookworm infection, caused by *Ancylostoma duodenale*, is prevalent among the agricultural workers in foci along the banks of the

p. 149(B)

164 Orontes River and in the irrigated districts
463 of the Euphrates river basin, especially in
369 the Al Jazira region. In a survey of representative population groups in Syria and Lebanon, reported in 1934,[35] hookworm ova were found in fecal specimens from 25 to 36 per cent of the farmers examined in the vicinity of Homs and Hama. Surveys in the Euphrates area suggest comparable infection rates. In the examination of 306 presumably healthy Arabs, from 9 to 60 years of age, who were engaged on excavations near Salihiye on the river about 60 miles south of Deir ez Zor in 1933,[35] slightly over 38 per cent were found to harbor hook-
164 worms. The prevalence of infection in the
369 agricultural communities along the Eu-
514 phrates and its tributaries probably aver-
515 ages from 25 to 35 per cent. Promiscuous defecation is widely practiced, and the children, running barefoot around the dwellings and in the fields, are particularly exposed to infection. No data are available regarding the degree of infection, but most observers believe that it is usually moderate. Similar studies undertaken in the areas around Damascus and Aleppo, in an Alawite village on the northern plateau and among Bedouin tribesmen south of the Euphrates yielded no evidence of infection.

164 Schistosomiasis. Schistosomiasis is endemic in two localized areas near the Turkish border—the Tell Abiad district on the upper reaches of the Belikh River and

Distribution of Schistosomiasis in Syria

p. 150(A)

SYRIA MD1

SILICOSIS AND BENIGN PNEUMOCONIOSIS ARE among the most important occupational diseases, but recognized cases are relatively few in number.

The smoking of *Cannabis indica* (hashish) and other types of drug addiction were formerly common. Within recent years they have been combated with some success by restrictive regulations and educational propaganda.

SUMMARY

Modern Syria, an independent republic since 1943, encompasses three of the former Levant states—Syria, Latakia and Jebel ed Druz. It has a population of slightly less than 3.2 million which is predominantly Moslem and Arab, but which includes several important religious and racial minority groups. Over three quarters of the inhabitants live in the western and the northwestern provinces which form the western arm of the so-called "Fertile Crescent."

The Ministry of Health (and Public Assistance), with headquarters in Damascus, is responsible for the health and the medical care of the population. Subordinate provincial health departments carry on the activities of the Ministry in each of the 9 *muhafazats*, or provinces. Autonomous municipal organizations function in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama. A limited number of philanthropic, mission and international agencies carry on health services in close co-operation with the Ministry. In 1951 there were 47 hospitals in Syria, with an aggregate capacity of 2,255 beds—approximately 0.7 beds per 1,000 inhabitants. Of this number, 22 hospitals, with 1,525 beds, were supported by the government, and the remainder by private organizations. In the same year, the Ministry maintained 111 clinics and dispensaries scattered throughout the country, including 3 maternity and child welfare centers, 7 mobile dispensaries and 6 mobile units for the treatment of specific diseases.

Water supplies are usually deficient, ex-